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ABSTRACT

Four operational null hypotheses were assessed in a study of ninth graders placed in junior high schools (grades 7 through 9) or senior high schools (grades 9 through 12). The hypotheses state that there would be no significant differences in: (1) the mean number of extracurricular activities (EAs) in which ninth graders participated, whether in junior or senior high school; (2) the overall academic achievement means of ninth graders in junior or senior high school; (3) the mean attitude toward self and school of both groups; and (4) the composite means between the two groups when EAs, achievement, and attitudes were considered together. Students in Mississippi from junior high (n=771) and senior high (n=825) ninth grades participated. Subjects responded to the Survey of Pupil Opinion (a measure of attitudes toward self and school), and completed questionnaires about EAs. Subjects in junior high schools participated in more EAs and achieved significantly higher grade point averages than did those at the senior high schools. There were no significant differences in attitudes toward self and school of the two groups. When all variables were considered together, there was a significant difference in favor of the junior high school ninth grade. Four tables present study data. (SLD)

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A Comparison of Differences in Extracurricular Activity Participation, Achievement, and Attitudes Toward School of Public School Ninth Grade Students Attending Junior High School and Those Attending Senior High Schools in Mississippi

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How successful are existing junior high schools in meeting the academic and social needs of ninth grade students? In many school districts across the United States, the ninth grade has been moved from the senior high school level (grades 9-12), with strong emphasis on academic and extracurricular activities, to the junior high school level (grades 7-9), with child-centered emphasis (Allen, 1980; Howard & Stoumbis, 1970).

Some educators question the placement of ninth grade students. Should they be placed with high school students or with junior high school students? Where do they belong and on what basis should their placement be determined (Thornburg, 1970; Jones, 1979; Leeper, 1979; Allen, 1980; Handley, 1982; Klingele, 1985)?

Foster and Martinez (1985), found that students in junior high schools are more likely to be involved in a wider range of activities, and derive more personal satisfaction from participating in extracurricular activities than high school students. Handley (1982) found that junior high school ninth grade students achieve as well or better than senior high school ninth grade students. Research by Wood (1973) indicated that no significant difference in attitude toward school between ninth grade students in junior high schools and ninth grade students in senior high schools.

The following four operational null hypotheses were used to structure this study. There will be no significant difference in:

1. the mean number of extracurricular activities in which ninth grade students in junior high schools (grades 7-9) and ninth grade students in senior high schools (grades 9-12) participated.

2. the overall academic achievement means of ninth grade students in the junior high schools and ninth grade students in the senior high schools.

3. the mean attitude toward self and school of ninth grade students in the junior high schools and ninth grade students in the senior high schools.

4. the composite means between the two groups of ninth grade students when extracurricular activities, achievement, and attitudes are considered as composite measures.

Method

One intact ninth grade classroom from each of 31 (out of a total of 38) Mississippi junior high schools (N = 771) and one intact ninth grade classroom from each of 33 (out of a total of 62) Mississippi senior high schools (N = 825) participated in the study. The students in each school were requested to respond to the Survey of Pupil Opinion (SURPO), a 30 item instrument developed by Kilbane (1972) to measure a student's attitude toward self and school. These students were also requested to indicate on the Extracurricular Checklist the extracurricular activities in which they were participating. School personnel were requested to write on the Grade-Point Average Form the overall GPA for the first semester of each student who responded to the SURPO and the Extracurricular Activity Checklist.

An independent t-test was utilized to compare the means of the GPAs and the means of the SURPO for the two types of schools. A multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if there

was a significant difference when the three variables (extracurricular activities, academic achievement, and attitudes toward self and school) were considered as composite measures. The .05 level of significance was used in this study.

Results

Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 illustrate the following results:

1. Ninth grade students in the junior high school participated significantly in more extracurricular activities ($\underline{M}$ = 2.68) than ninth grade students in the senior high schools ($\underline{M}$ = 1.99), $\underline{p} < .01$.

2. Ninth grade students in the junior high school achieved significantly higher ($\underline{M}$ = 2.59) than the ninth grade students in the senior high schools ($\underline{M}$ = 2.24), $\underline{p} < .01$.

3. There was no significant difference in attitudes toward self and school of ninth grade students in the junior high schools ($\underline{M}$ = 77.87) and ninth grade students in the senior high schools ($\underline{M}$ = 78.12), $\underline{p} > .05$.

4. A significant difference existed in favor of the junior high schools when all the variables (extracurricular activities, academic achievement, and attitudes toward self and school) were considered as composite measures ($\underline{p} < .01$).

Table 1

A Comparison of the Means for Total Extracurricular Activities for Ninth Graders Housed in Junior High and Senior High School Settings

Groups	N	M	SD	t
Ninth Graders in Junior High	771	2.68	2.30	6.20*
Ninth Graders in Senior High	825	1.99	2.14	

*$p < .01$.

Table 2

A Comparison of the Means for Total Overall GPA for Ninth Graders Housed in Junior High and Senior High School Settings

Groups	N	M	SD	t
Ninth Graders in Junior High	771	2.59	.89	6.91*
Ninth Graders in Senior High	825	2.24	1.11	

*$p < .01$.

Table 3

A Comparison of the Means for Total Attitude Toward Self and School for Ninth Graders Housed in Junior High and Senior High School Settings

Groups	N	M	SD	t
Ninth Graders in Junior High	771	77.87	8.07	.60*
Ninth Graders in Senior High	825	78.12	8.48	

* N.S.

Table 4

Overall Comparison of Ninth Graders in Junior High and Senior High School Settings When Extracurricular Activities, Achievement, and Attitude are Considered Collectively

Criteria	Junior High Setting M	Junior High Setting SD	Senior High Setting M	Senior High Setting SD	df	F
Extracurricular activities	2.68	2.30	1.99	2.14	1,1594	38.38*
Academic achievement	2.59	.89	2.24	1.11	1,1594	47.77*
Attitude toward self and school	77.87	8.07	78.12	8.48	1,1594	.36
Overall					3,1591	20.80*

*$p < .01$.

Discussion

There are two important findings in the present study. First, ninth grade students in junior high schools participate in more extracurricular activities than ninth grade students in senior high schools. Second, ninth grade students in junior high schools achieve higher GPAs than senior high school ninth grade students. Based on these findings, if increased activity participation and higher academic achievement for ninth grade students are what administrators seek, the solution may lie in the placement of ninth grade students in junior high schools (grades 7-9).

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